



## Strategic Directions 2019 – 2022

# Building Communities that support, inform and challenge

**SUMMARY** Immigration detention causes long lasting damage to individuals, families and communities. It is a wholly unjust system that deprives people of their liberty for indefinite periods, a process that simultaneously dehumanises and criminalises. AVID addresses this by strengthening human connection, building communities of support and friendship inside and outside the walls of detention while working to reform the system.

### CONTEXT

**For over 25 years, AVID – the Association of Visitors to Immigration**

**Detainees – has worked to address the harm done by immigration detention to individuals and communities.** We do this by reducing the isolation experienced by people who are locked up far away from friends, family and support networks. Detention dehumanises by removing rights and freedoms. As part of the hostile environment, detention disempowers individuals and separates families and communities. AVID challenges this by building communities of support, fostering a sense of solidarity, and empowering

people inside and outside of detention to reclaim their rights through access to support, advice and ultimately justice.

Since our inception in 1994, AVID has worked towards fundamental reform, seeking a fair and just system that treats people with respect. Working to change this system in a culture that increasingly identifies migrants as ‘outsiders’ presents challenges and a context where friendship and the assertion of individual connections take on a powerful meaning and impact. This has become even more significant within the hostile environment, which divides, and seeks to isolate.


AVID challenges this dehumanising system by fostering community support, built on human connections. With the collective voice of our community, we work from a perspective of friendship, support and connections to create change. Together, we seek to challenge the impunity with which detention is used, and to mitigate the human and social cost, working towards a system that is based on engagement and not enforcement.

● **AVID’s unique position is our ability to build a connection between the individuals, communities and the system to work towards meaningful reform.**

#### AVID

Wework, Keltan House,  
115 Mare Street  
London E8 4RU

0207 281 0533  
enquiries@  
aviddetention.org.uk

 @aviddetention

[aviddetention.org.uk](http://aviddetention.org.uk)

## STRATEGIC FOCUS

As such, **our focus for the next strategic period centres on building communities that support, inform, and challenge**, putting human connections at the heart of systems change.

This strategic focus will allow us to work toward the following impact: **to reduce the human and social cost of detention.**

We will seek to measure this impact through delivery of three broad outcomes:



## STRATEGIC AREA 1



### **We increase understanding of the harm caused by detention on individuals, families and communities.**

We make information on the realities of the hostile environment available to a wider public. Our strength is the unique perspective of visitors and those affected directly by detention, as we highlight day to day lived experiences. Our national membership of organisations working in every single detention centre provides a credible, authoritative voice for change. We share stories and testimony about the human and social impact of detention with people who may have been previously unaware of its reach, enabling them to engage in challenging detention from a more informed position of knowledge and insight. We seek to positively influence understanding about immigration detention and its impact, so that solutions can be developed.

We disseminate information widely, ensuring that people in detention or affected by detention, their visitors, our members, supporters and colleagues within the sector have access to high quality up to date information and resources about immigration detention in the UK, helping to build momentum for reform.

AVID members stand in solidarity with those who are detained: informed, knowledgeable and ready to act as part of a wider movement to bring about lasting reform. Joining AVID enables individuals and groups to take part in broader calls for change, as part of a community of friendship, solidarity and action.

## STRATEGIC AREA 2

### **We strengthen and grow our community of solidarity and friendship with people affected by detention.**

We coordinate and develop a network of visitors groups and a community of supporters who wish to act to address the harm done by detention. With over 25 years of experience we seek to deepen knowledge, enhance understanding and build skills amongst volunteer groups, working directly with them to build capacity and develop their sustainability. We support the activities and actions of our membership in both development and training, ensuring best practice and skills sharing across the UK, so that those affected by detention have access to support that is informed, tailored and meaningful.

Moving forwards we will seek to strengthen our community network and build our shared expertise in supporting those affected by detention in its broadest sense including those at risk of detention or who have experienced detention.

As a hub point for members, we facilitate the transfer of skills and knowledge amongst grassroots organisations across the UK, building a movement that can support and inform. We provide spaces for the exchange of information and skills to enable our community to access help and support, stay abreast of developments and effectively engage with work to tackle systemic change in an ever changing political environment.

## STRATEGIC AREA 3

### We influence reform of detention policy and practice.

We play a pivotal role in the movement for systemic detention reform, coordinating and facilitating collaboration amongst our members, partners, and supporters. Our experience of detention's human impact is the means through which we push for change in both policy and practice. AVID speaks with unique credibility, thanks to our membership, with a presence in every detention centre, and many hundreds of volunteers forming relationships and hearing first-hand about the experiences, harm, and impact on individuals detained. We have a solid reputation and a solutions focus.

From this base of knowledge and insight, we work towards fundamental reform of the system of detention, seeking to influence civil society organisations, scrutiny bodies, inspectorates, policy makers, government and parliamentarians. AVID focuses on the reduction of harm to the most vulnerable individuals and of the ways in which detention itself makes people vulnerable to harm. We seek to promote and support community based alternatives to detention, building on our knowledge of the importance of locally owned and led initiatives.

## CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINABILITY

These three strategic areas are underpinned by the experience, skills and knowledge which AVID has built over some 25 years, and which stem from being a membership organisation. Our membership is at the root of our portfolio of activities. This next strategic period will allow AVID to consolidate its role as a hub of knowledge, support and information for our community, bridging the gap between those affected by detention and the system itself.

● Our new strategic areas will enable AVID to increase its sustainability by:

**Increasing our membership and reach**

**Increasing our organisational voice and presence to strengthen our work and raise our profile**

**Strengthening AVID's expertise to influence policy making around community based case management alternatives to detention**

**Broadening the appeal of AVID's work to other partners and supporters**

**Navigating the ever changing detention environment by retaining a collective voice and seek to work collaboratively to build communities beyond the visits hall**

**Piloting programmes to consider how AVID's expertise and skills can reach a wider community in support of those at risk of detention or having experienced detention**

## MEASURING PROGRESS

The table below provides an overview of the types of activities we will undertake in the coming years to help achieve our goals. We will continue to review and refine these as our strategy develops

Strategic Area	Outcome	Example Activities	Example Indicators	
<p><b>STRATEGIC AREA 1:</b> We increase understanding of the harm caused by detention on individuals, families and communities</p>	<p>More people are aware of the injustices of detention and the harm caused</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce authoritative, credible information materials in a range of formats and for a range of new audiences</li> <li>Ensure our website, and members area is a 'one stop shop' for those interested or engaged in working to support those affected by immigration detention</li> <li>Disseminate timely and engaging policy, legal and network news, including through social media, website and our monthly detention digest (newsletter)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host tailored information and awareness raising events, engaging proactively with key themes and policy priorities</li> <li>Conduct research on the daily lived experiences of those in detention and those affected by detention, and ensure this evidence is widely disseminated as a tool for change</li> <li>Develop our media related communications, ensuring our narrative for change reaches new targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in numbers volunteering to support people affected by detention</li> <li>Increase in individual members of AVID network</li> <li>Increase in quantity and quality of information available on immigration detention and the harm it causes</li> <li>Increase in the numbers and range of people engaging with our information sources</li> <li>Increase in people engaging with the issues raised by taking action</li> </ul>
<p><b>STRATEGIC AREA 2:</b> We strengthen and grow our community of solidarity and friendship with people affected by detention</p>	<p>Our community network is stronger, bigger and more sustainable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise and enhance our suite of detention training modules</li> <li>Develop new training methodologies to meet the needs of a more diverse membership network, including through online training</li> <li>Proactively engage with experts to develop new training areas, including in new forms of support for those 'at risk' or who have experienced detention</li> <li>Disseminate learnings, best practice and share skills and experiences amongst member organisations through ad hoc events, skills sharing programmes, mentoring programmes and outreach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Augment our suite of learning resources including producing accessible information sheets, briefings, guidance notes and factsheets</li> <li>Enhance community support for immigration detainees in prisons</li> <li>Explore opportunities for collective advocacy through the AVID network and beyond</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in numbers of people affected by detention receiving community based volunteer support</li> <li>Increase in numbers of volunteers trained, engaged, and supported throughout their volunteer journey</li> <li>Development of online training programme</li> <li>Development of new training areas and themes</li> <li>Strengthening of the capacity and infrastructure of AVID member groups</li> <li>Sustainability of AVID and its member groups</li> <li>Increase in collaboration between AVID member groups</li> <li>Increase in number of volunteers supporting immigration detainees in prisons</li> <li>Increase in engagement with learning opportunities across the AVID network</li> </ul>
<p><b>STRATEGIC AREA 3:</b> We influence reform of detention policy and practice</p>	<p>Detention reform continues in a way that reflects our key asks, and is based on engagement not enforcement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen our position as a credible voice and advisor on the harms of detention, to civil society, policy makers and parliament</li> <li>Ensure volunteer access to all places of immigration detention</li> <li>Explore opportunities to engage with, and raise awareness of, community based alternatives as an advocacy tool to reduce immigration detention</li> <li>Actively seek to reduce the use of prisons for immigration detention purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to influence government policy and practice towards detention reform, through proactive engagement with decision makers at a range of levels</li> <li>Engage with opportunities for policy reform and change nationally and internationally, including international human rights mechanisms, UK monitoring bodies and other statutory mechanisms</li> <li>Explore how to strengthen our voice by engaging people affected by immigration detention in a way that is meaningful</li> <li>Produce regular policy and legal updates for our members and the wider public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in influence of AVID's narrative for change as part of policy reform process</li> <li>Increase in momentum for detention reform nationally</li> <li>Increase in awareness of policy solutions to potentially reduce detention</li> <li>Increase in citations of AVID's evidence in key inquiries, reports and investigations</li> <li>Sustainability in levels of access for volunteers to places of detention across the country</li> <li>Increase in AVID members taking part in detention advocacy</li> </ul>

*These are not exhaustive lists of activities and outputs. AVID will prioritise and pursue specific activities based on regular contextual analysis of the political and policy environment, and our resources. Regular Trustee meetings, outreach communication and conversations with our membership, funders and other stakeholders will enable us to gather intelligence, check progress, identify actions and implement activities.*